

2

Docket No. UTR-103XC1
Serial No. 09/909,735

Please substitute the following claim:

Claim 21 (Amended):

a1 A composition comprising a carrier and a nodulation inoculant produced according to the process of claim 1, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, or 32.

Please add the following new claims:

Claim 22 (New).

A method of producing a nodulation inoculant containing reduced amounts of cell density factor (CDF) comprising:

- a) providing a liquid growth medium suitable for the growth of nodulating bacteria;
- b) adding iron to the liquid medium in amounts sufficient to reduce cell density factor (CDF) expression by said bacteria;
- c) adding nodulating bacteria to said liquid medium; and
- d) culturing the liquid medium containing the added nodulating bacteria to provide a nodulation inoculant.
- a2

Claim 23 (New):

The method according to claim 1, wherein said nodulation inoculant has increased nodulation efficiency as compared to a nodulation inoculant that is not treated with iron.

Claim 24 (New):

The method according to claim 22, wherein said nodulation inoculant has increased nodulation efficiency as compared to a nodulation inoculant that is not treated with iron.

Claim 25 (New).

A method of increasing the nodulation efficiency of a nodulation inoculant comprising the addition of iron to *Bradyrhizobium japonicum* cultures in a liquid medium and growing said cultures, wherein said iron is added in amounts sufficient to reduce the CDF expression in said cultures.

Claim 26. (New)

The method according to claim 25, wherein said nodulation inoculant has increased nodulation efficiency as compared to a nodulation inoculant that is not treated with iron

Claim 27. (New)

The method according to claim 22, wherein a single species or strain of nodulating bacteria is added to said liquid culture.

Claim 28. (New)

The method according to claim 27, wherein a single species of nodulating bacteria is added to said liquid culture.

Claim 29. (New)

Az The method according to claim 27, wherein a single strain of nodulating bacteria is added to said liquid culture.

Claim 30 (New)

The method according to claim 28, wherein said single species is *Bradyrhizobia japonicum*.

Claim 31 (New)

The method according to claim 29, wherein said single strain is *Bradyrhizobia japonicum* USDA 110.

Claim 32 (New)

The method according to claim 29, wherein said single strain is *Bradyrhizobia japonicum* USDA 123.
